

Workforce Report

icims® Insights

OCTOBER 2025

Focus: Holiday hiring

Award-winning
data program



DATA SCIENCE
SOLUTION OF THE YEAR



BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE
SOLUTION PROVIDER OF THE YEAR



Big picture: October Insights

Mixed signals. As overall job openings rose in September for the second month straight, hires continued to drop.

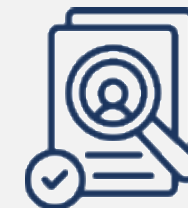
Ho Ho Hum. Retailers are adding jobs and increasing hires ahead of the holidays, but applicant interest is tapering off.

In high gear. Transportation hiring is revving up, with job openings and hires hitting a 13-month high in September.

BY THE NUMBERS:



Employers are approaching the holiday season with caution, as hires have dropped 3% since July.



The age of the overall applicant pool skewed slight older YoY with the share of 18–24–year-olds shrinking from 45% to 42%.



Retail job openings climbed 15% and hires 7% year over year in September as employers prep for the holiday season.

iCIMS Insights Workforce Reports monitor monthly labor market activity based on hundreds of millions of applicants and millions of users. Organizations can use this data as a measuring stick to anticipate and adapt to ever-changing workforce dynamics.



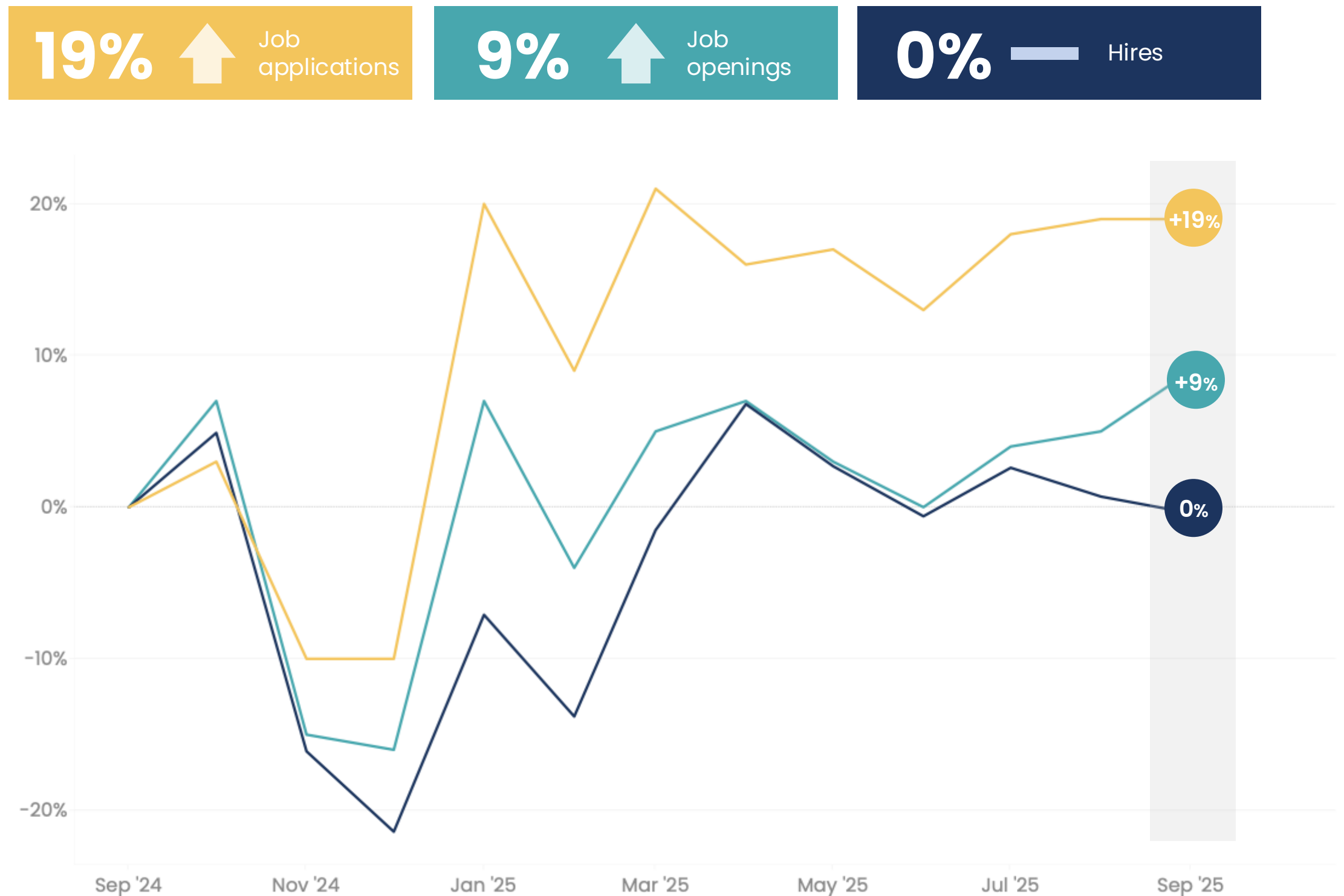
Employers are tiptoeing toward the holiday season

iCIMS Insights quick take:

While a new job is on candidates' holiday wish list, employers are still cautious about hiring.

- **Proceed with caution:** Employers are opening roles, but many are slow to convert. This is consistent with public signals that seasonal hiring plans are muted this year, according to the September retail hiring outlook from Challenger, Gray & Christmas.
- **Supply and demand:** Applications are up 19% year over year while hires hold flat, indicating that supply is there but conversion is the restraint.
- **Bottom line:** The wins this holiday hiring season will come from faster conversion, not more sourcing.

Since September 2024



Platform indicators

Job openings, applications and hires
September 2024–September 2025



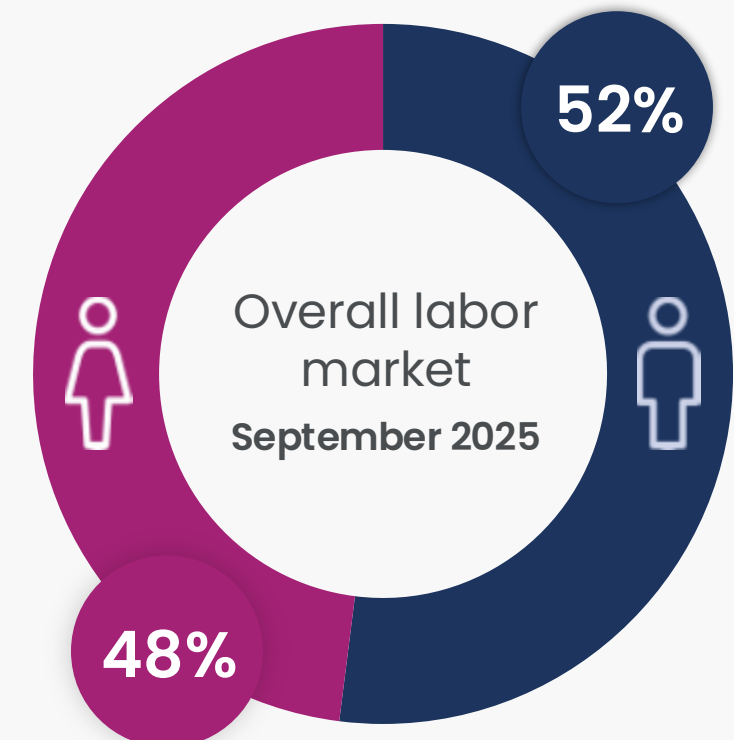
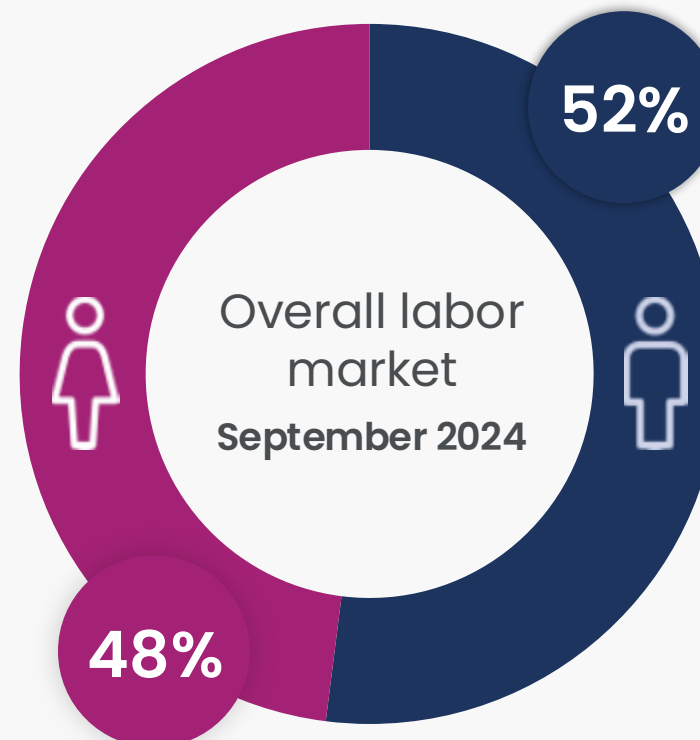
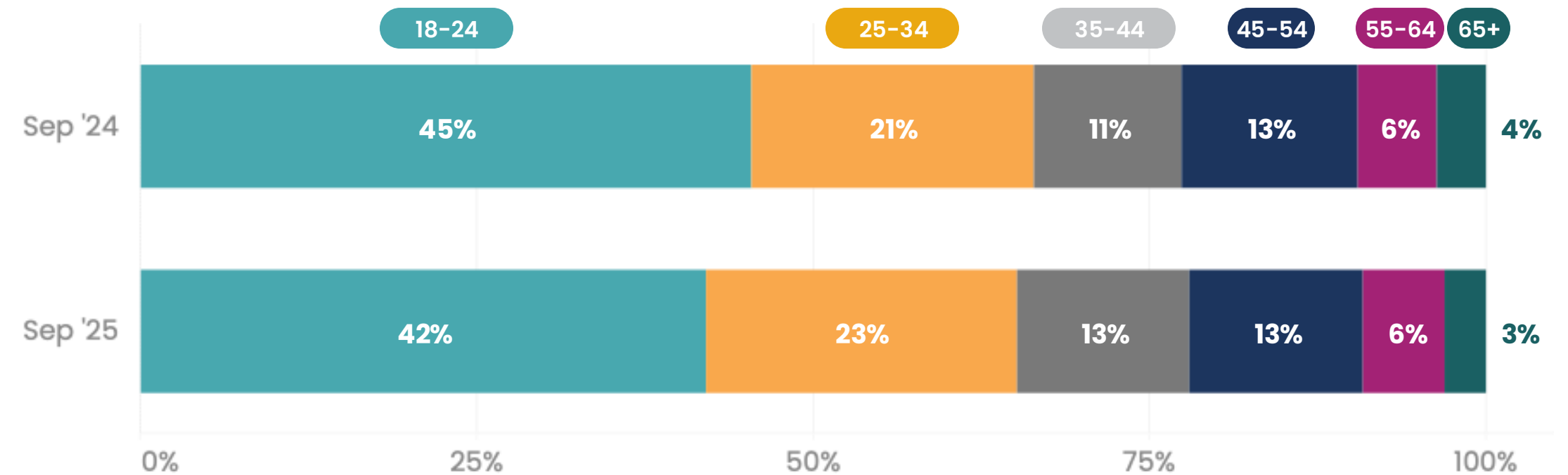
Interest is waning as unemployment for younger applicants rises

iCIMS Insights quick take:

The share of applicants aged 18–24-year-old shrank year over year.

- **Big picture:** Unemployment for job seekers aged 16–24 hit 10.5% in August, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics compared to the overall national rate of 4.3%.
- **Losing interest:** As competition for entry-level roles remains high and unemployment rises, younger candidate interest has eased in the last 12 months.
- **Gender mix:** Overall, the mix of male and female applicants remained unchanged year over year.

Applicant demographics: Overall





Monthly focus: Holiday hiring

The holiday sprint presents many challenges to retail and logistics companies, who orchestrate a year's worth of shopping in a few short weeks. Yet hiring managers tell us that finding the right people for the job is the hardest part.



*quality of
candidates is their
biggest challenge*



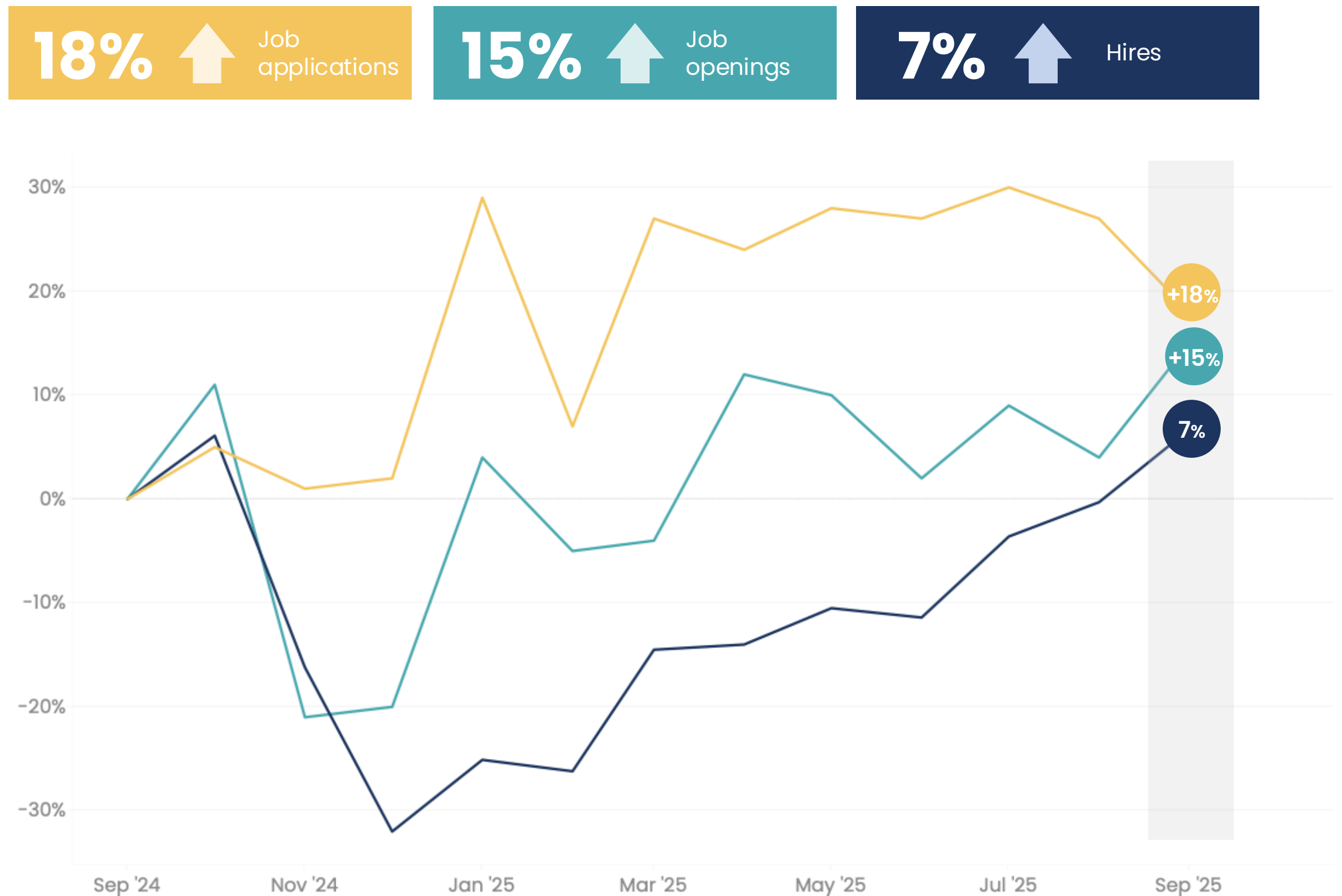
Retail's holiday hiring spree hits a snag

iCIMS Insights quick take:

Retailers are adding jobs and increasing hires ahead of the holidays, but applicant interest is tapering off.

- **Stocking up:** Job openings climbed 15% and hires 7% year over year in September, signaling that retailers are on the hunt for talent as they gear up for peak holiday demand.
- **Application activity is waning:** Job applications have climbed 18% year over year. Yet despite strong annual growth, application activity has declined for three consecutive months, dropping 9% since July.
- **What's at play?** The question is, have eager job seekers already locked in their holiday gigs, or are retail applicants starting to tap the brakes on their job search?

Since September 2024



Retail platform indicators

Job openings, applications and hires
September 2024–September 2025



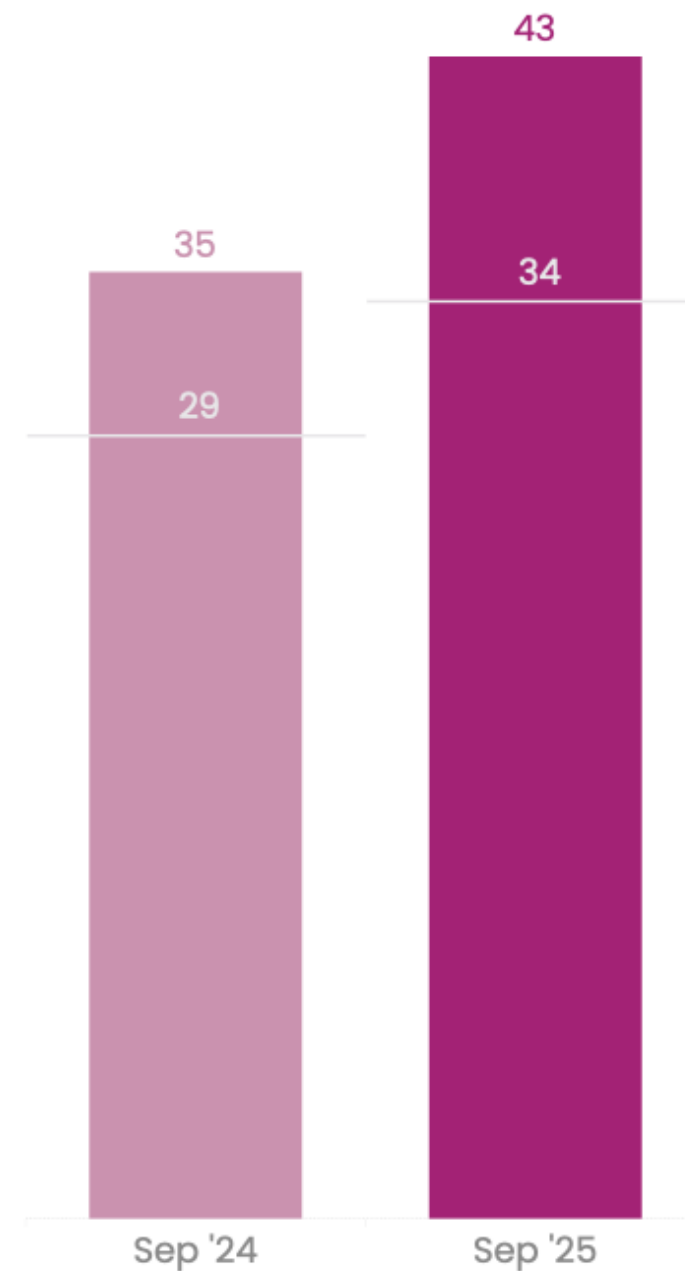
Retail hiring timelines tick up

iCIMS Insights quick take:

Retailers aren't short on applicants – they're short on time. With more candidates in the mix, hiring decisions are taking longer.

- **More candidates on deck:** Retail averaged 43 applicants per opening (APO) in September, up from 35 last year and well above the overall labor market average of 34.
- **Hiring pace eases:** Time to fill (TTF) edged up from 40 to 42 days. With more resumes to review, hiring teams may be taking extra time to prioritize the right fit.
- **The catch:** Retail candidates expect speed. Keep pace by streamlining offer approvals, using AI for screening and optimizing mobile-first apply flows.

Applicants per opening
Retail vs. Overall labor market



Time to fill (in days)
Retail vs. Overall labor market



Applicant volume is up, but so is time to fill. Retail teams are drowning in choices, not shortages. It is time to review your hiring processes to eliminate obstacles.



Trent Cotton,
Head of Talent Acquisition
Insights & Analyst
Relations, iCIMS



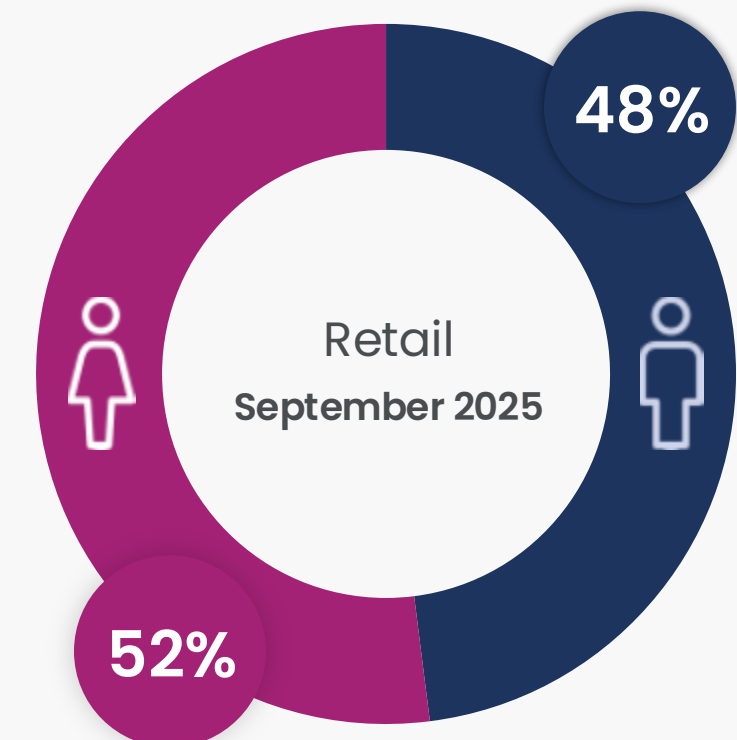
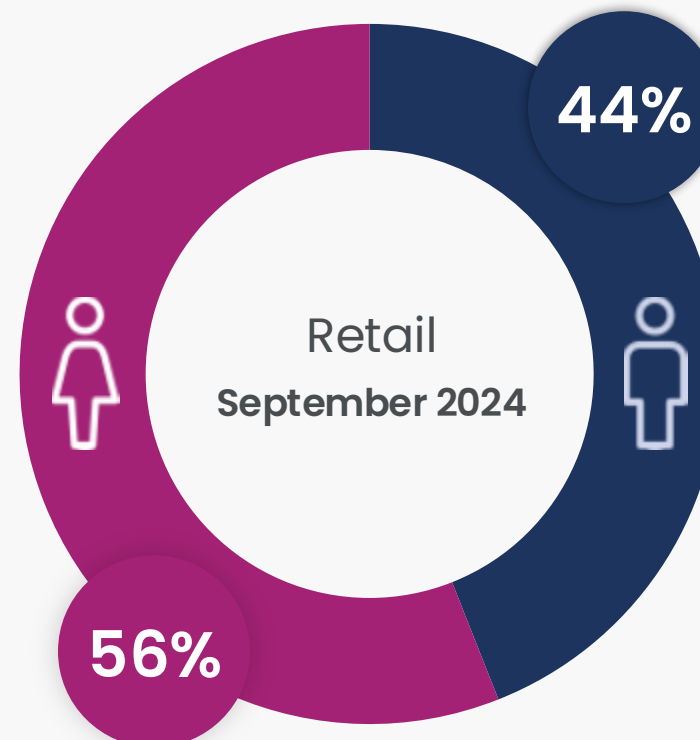
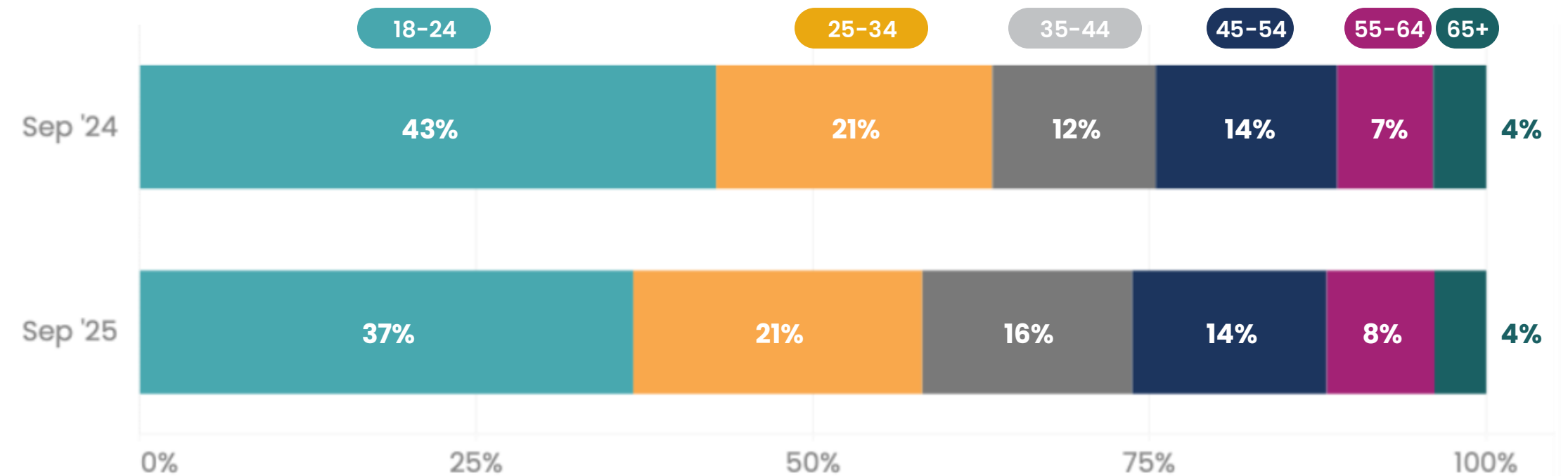
Retail's seasonal bench is getting older — and more male

icims Insights quick take:

The retail application pool is shifting away from teens and early 20s workers.

- **Gen Z cools:** Applicants aged 18–24 made up a smaller share of the September pool than they did a year earlier, dropping from 43% to 37%.
- **Mid-career growth:** Applicants aged 35–44 rose from 12% to 16%. This older tilt brings more experience and steadier availability, which can help reduce mid-season backfills.
- **Role reversal:** The share of female applicants slipped from 56% to 52% while male applicants grew from 44% to 48%.

Applicant demographics: Retail





Filling critical sales roles in 8 days

The Container Store

At **The Container Store**, we've worked hard to prove that hiring velocity and candidate quality can absolutely coexist. By simplifying our process, empowering leaders to move quickly and leveraging iCIMS technology along with consultative, sales-focused interview guides, we've **reduced our time-to-hire to around 8 days**.

We did so without compromising the cultural and service standards that define who we are. For us, speed is simply another expression of respect for the candidate's time and our customers' needs.



Danny Rojas
Senior Manager, Talent Acquisition



Transportation hits the gas on hiring ahead of the holidays

iCIMS Insights quick take:

Transportation hiring is revving up, with job openings and hires hitting a 13-month high in September.

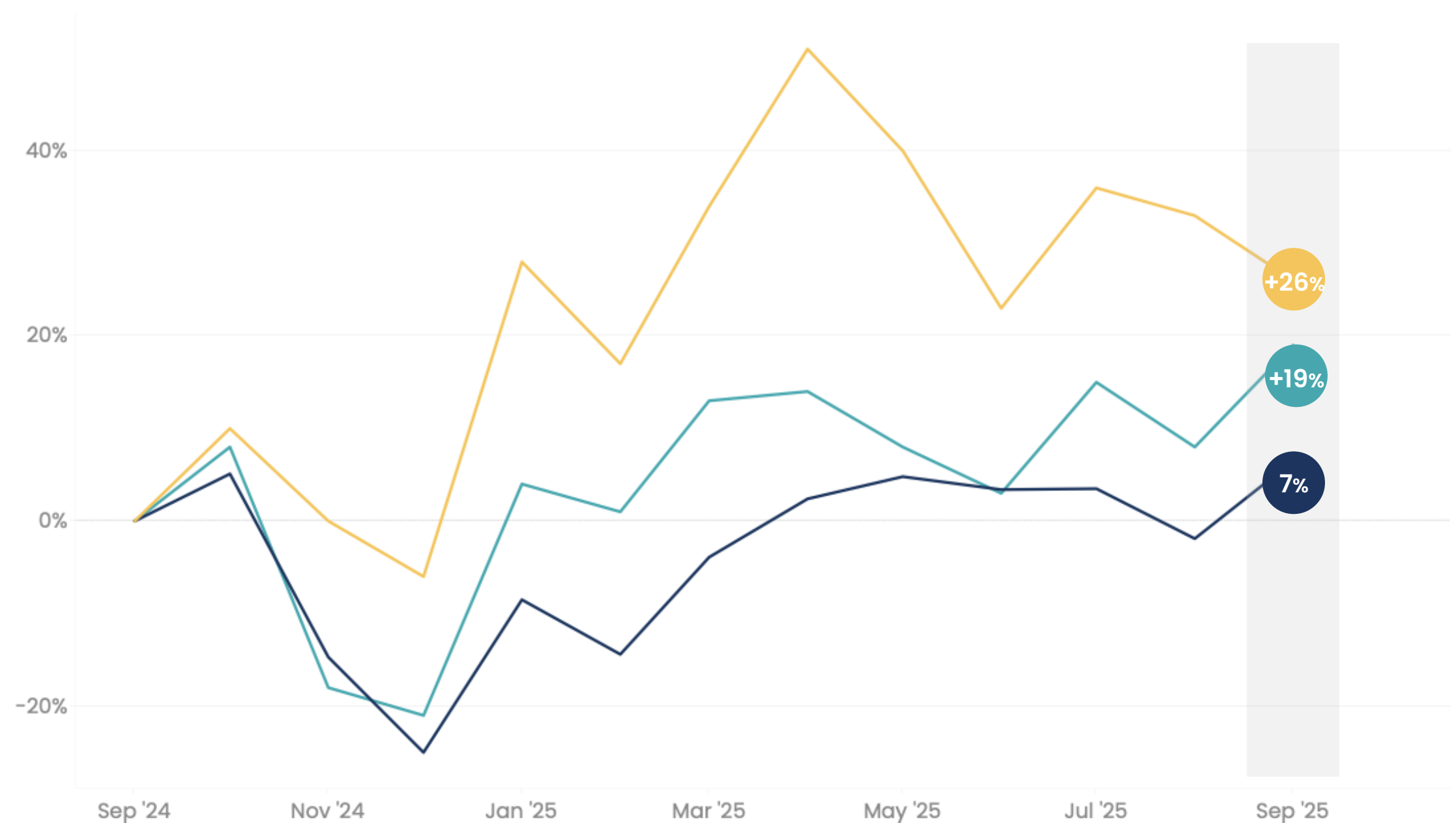
- **Full steam ahead:** Job openings are up 19% and hires are up 7% year over year in September as employers prepare for holiday demand.
- **Applications stay fueled:** Transportation job interest is strong, with applications up 26% year over year. Activity has eased since July but remains elevated.
- **Shifting gears:** Economic uncertainty and broader market unease may be starting to temper job seeker confidence just as employers need more talent on the road.

Since September 2024

26% ↑ Job applications

19% ↑ Job openings

7% ↑ Hires



Transportation platform indicators

Job openings, applications and hires
September 2024–September 2025



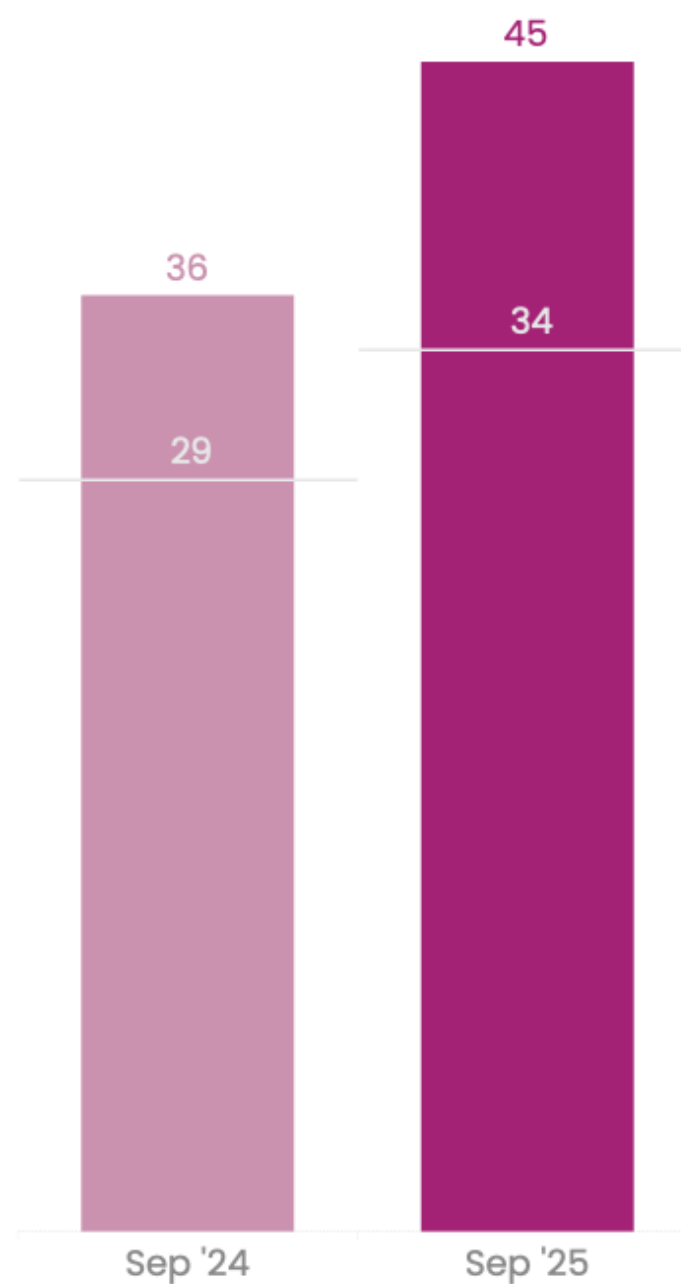
Transportation is filling roles in the fast lane

icims Insights quick take:

Transportation employers are moving fast, cutting hiring times while drawing more applicants per opening (APO).

- **More candidates on board:** Transportation roles are drawing more traffic, averaging 45 APO in September, up from 36 APO last year and above the labor market average of 34 APO.
- **Faster hires, smoother rides:** Time to fill (TTF) dropped from 42 to 38 days in the past year, showing employers are moving faster and more efficiently even as applicant volume climbs.
- **Full speed ahead:** Candidate quality remains a top challenge for frontline roles, but TA teams in transportation are acting quickly to secure talent and keep goods – and hiring – moving ahead of the holiday rush.

Applicants per opening
Transportation vs. Overall labor market



Time to fill (in days)
Transportation vs. Overall labor market



Despite the increase in candidates, the transportation sector is lowering the time to fill, indicating potential progress in process improvements.



Trent Cotton,
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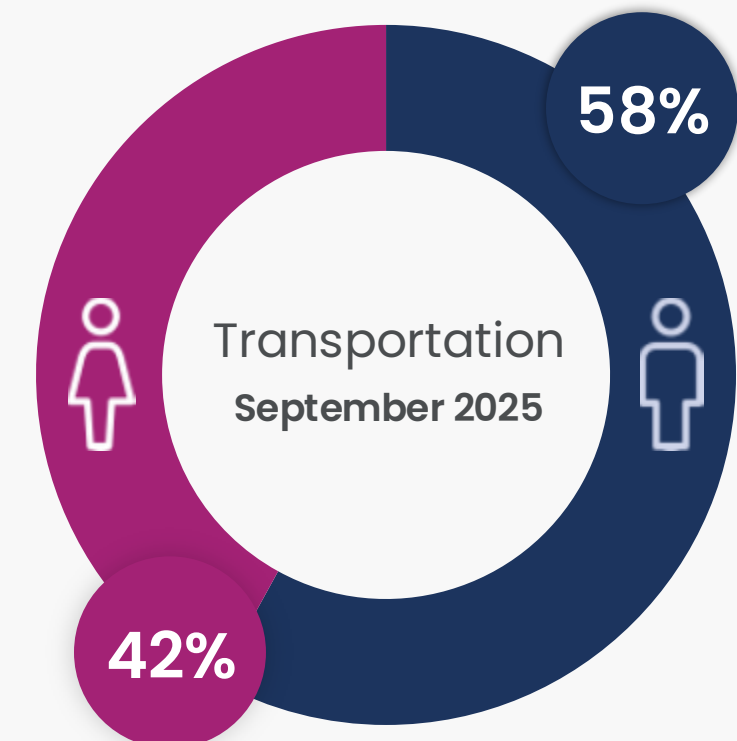
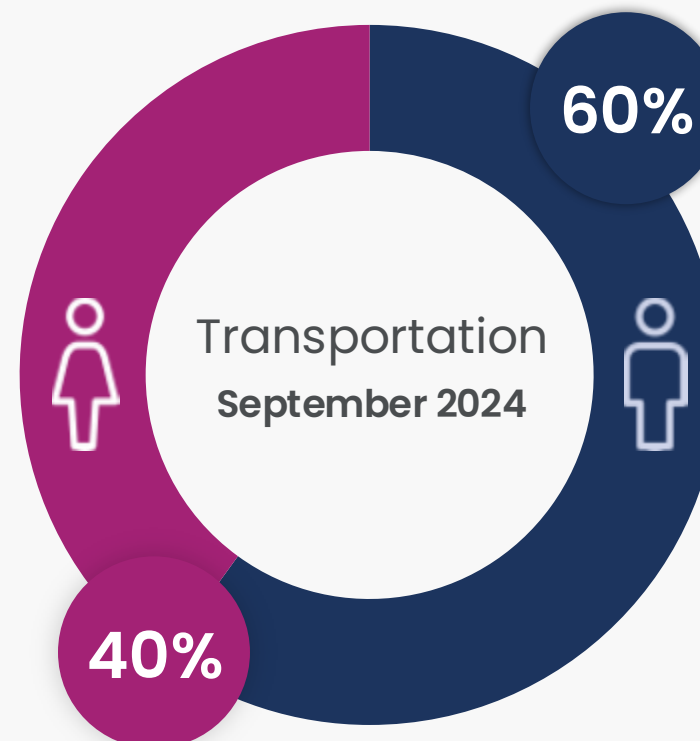
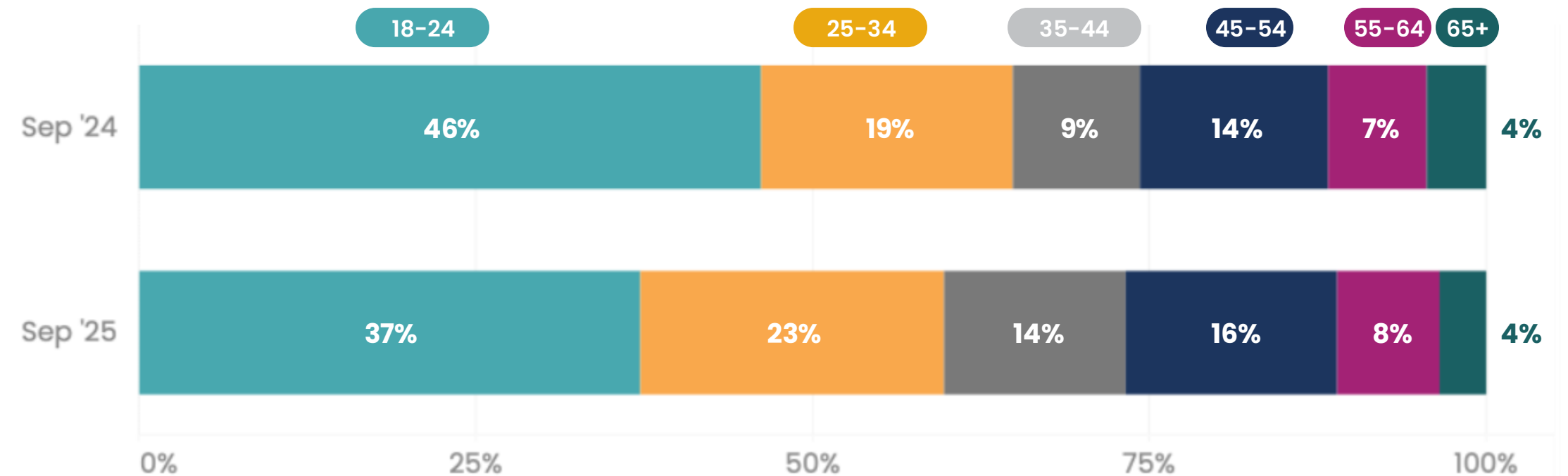
Your delivery driver could be looking older

icims Insights quick take:

The transportation sector is heading into the holiday season older and slightly more female.

- **More miles:** Older candidates are fueling the transportation applicant pool, with the youngest age band shrinking from 46% to 37% year over year.
- **Plot twist:** Female applicants rose from 40% to 42% as male applicants eased from 60% to 58%.
- **Bottom line:** Employers should prioritize quick decisions on experienced candidates while adjusting schedules as the workforce pivots from student shifts to seasoned crews.

Applicant demographics: Transportation





FROM INSIGHTS TO IMPACT

Tailored takeaways for business, HR and talent leaders

Whether you lead people, run operations or shape strategy, you can use these insights to align teams, reduce friction and move faster on your goals.

FOR THE Talent Leaders

- With hiring plateauing and openings creeping up, speed becomes your differentiator. The teams that streamline decisions from recruiter screen to offer will win the best talent.
- Begin with a journey or process map to identify the bottlenecks, then focus on one step in the process to streamline. Then test and iterate.

FOR THE CHROs

- Your problem isn't applicant volume, it's hiring speed. Stop pouring budget into sourcing and redirect it toward faster decision-making and cleaner handoffs between recruiter and hiring manager.
- Take advantage of the candidate flow; don't wait on holiday hiring. Warm past applicants, line up offers early and secure talent before competitors wake up.

FOR THE CXOs

- Velocity is the obstacle. Encourage managers in your organization to move on top talent fast.
- Waiting for the height of holiday season to hire is a risky move. If you foresee a need, secure the talent bench now or pay a premium later when competitors start scrambling.



Want more great insights?

iCIMS 2025 State of Frontline Hiring

Frontline roles are the backbone of our workforce, but hiring for them continues to be challenging. Based on fresh data from over 2,000 frontline workers and hiring managers across healthcare, hospitality, manufacturing and retail, our [2025 State of Frontline Hiring Report](#) uncovers why companies are struggling to fill roles.

iCIMS 2025 State of the CHRO Report

The role of HR has never been more strategic. Learn how 1,000 CHROs and chief people officers are navigating the shift and how 500 CIOs see HR navigating TA tech in [iCIMS 2025 State of the CHRO Report](#).

iCIMS Talent Experience Report

Explore what candidates want right now and how talent acquisition pros are delivering those experiences in our second annual [Talent Experience Report](#).



About iCIMS

iCIMS is a leading provider of talent acquisition technology that enables organizations everywhere to build winning workforces.

Visit www.icims.com to learn more.



Data Breakthrough Awards:
2025 Business Intelligence
Solution Provider of the Year

Workforce data is vital to driving business forward.

iCIMS Insights provides data that is:

- Current
- Cross-industry
- Dual-focused on employer and job seeker intentions and activity

Data derived from:



3.3M+ global
platform users



223M+ applications
in 2024



630M+ candidate
profiles



5.4M+ hires in
2024